

Securing Your University Offer for Creative Writing

Essay Competition Award Ceremony:
July 23rd, 2022

**New College of
the Humanities**





Agenda

- Welcome
- Studying Creative Writing at University: an Overview
- Submitting a Competitive Application
- NCH Insights
- Q&A



Studying Creative Writing at University: an overview



What is the study of Creative Writing?

- Developing both your creative and critical writing skills
- Studying various genres and styles, writing forms and techniques
- Allows you to to analytically look at existing works of literature, as you would in an English degree, but also to develop your own skills as a writer
- Covers all aspects of writing from fiction to non-fiction, and poetry to scriptwriting
- Opportunity to explore literary theory - philosophical and conceptual ideas that inform, challenge and problematise the ways we read



Where and how can you study Creative Writing?

- Single Honours BA Creative Writing
- Many joint and combined honours options, e.g.: Creative Writing and English, Creative Writing with History (*note that the study balance is likely to be other than 50/50 if it's Creative Writing *with* rather than Creative Writing *and*)
- Different degree spans (standard English 3 years, standard Scottish 4 years, fast-track 2 years etc)
- Degree apprenticeships take a more practical approach (potentially useful to fast track toward particular careers)
- Full-time/part-time; online/in-person; study abroad

How is Creative Writing taught?

- **Reading:** Set readings are vital for Creative Writing, as you will be looking in detail at different texts, writers and genres
- **Lectures:** Lecturers can discuss the set reading and analyse various texts, as well as further contextualise key topics
- **Seminars and Workshops:** Seminars allow for a more in-depth discussion of a topic and a chance to ask any questions to your lecturer/seminar supervisor. It's even more important that you are well prepared for the seminar as you will need to participate. Workshops allow you to develop your writing and editing skills, and facilitate peer review
- **Essays:** Formative and summative, to test your writing and analytical skills
- **Presentations:** Occasionally presentations are used to assess how well you understand a topic - these may be individual or group presentations



What skills do you develop?

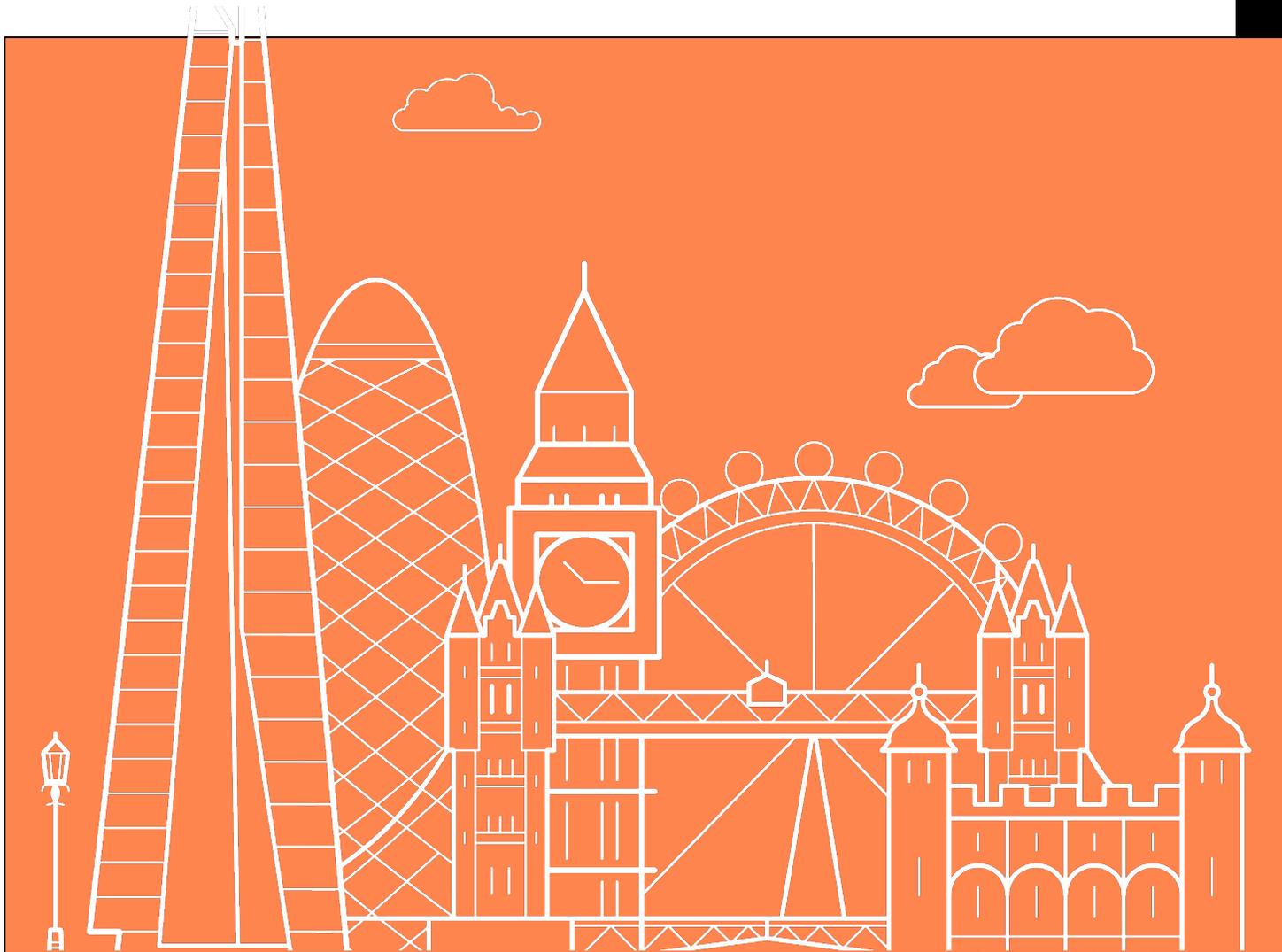
- Essay writing
- Creative writing
- Analysis
- Research
- Critical and creative thinking
- Interdisciplinary skills
- Referencing skills
- Time management

The skills you will acquire as a Creative Writing graduate will allow you to pivot flexibly into a variety of industries, when you enter the working world.

What can you do after your degree?

As a Creative Writing graduate your transferable skills can take you into ANY industry. Some of the top graduate destinations are:

- Wholesale and retail trade
- Arts, entertainment, and recreation
- Professional, scientific, and technical
- Accommodation and food service
- Education



Submitting a Competitive Application for Creative Writing

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What are the entry requirements?

UCAS

Information provided by ucas.com

A levels:

- Usually need a minimum of two A levels, with three A levels and A-B grades required for the most popular courses
- Entry requirements range from BCC to AAB
- English A level may be required
- Other useful subjects to hold for Creative Writing degrees include any other humanities subject

International Baccalaureate Diploma:

- From 30-39 overall in the IB Diploma

Scottish Highers:

- From BBBB to AABBB (most frequently AABBB)



What are admissions tutors looking for?

- Enthusiasm and motivation to study Creative Writing
- Credible evidence that supports your subject passion
- Proactive subject exploration and engagement - e.g.: wider reading beyond the set texts
- Relevant extra-curricular/super-curricular activities
- Interests outside of school, relating to Creative Writing
- Relevant and transferable work experience
- Aims and goals; career plans if known
- Understanding of the demands of studying at university, and how this is different from school



What super-curricular activities would support my application?

Super-curricular activities take the subjects you study further, beyond what you have learnt at school. Some examples for Creative Writing may include:

- Wider reading beyond the set texts
- Reading specialist magazines and journals
- Attending university taster lectures or taster days
- Listening to podcasts, TED talks or online lectures
- Taking part in book clubs, drama clubs, slam poetry events or writing challenges
- Attending a Creative Writing Summer School
- Taking an online (MOOC) Creative Writing course
- Watching plays at the theatre/cinema/online
- Taking part in university essay competitions!

Why is the personal statement so important?

- Often your only chance to 'sell yourself' to the university and impress the admissions tutor
- Helps to differentiate between equally excellent candidates with similar or identical grade profiles, especially for competitive courses
- Helps if you are a borderline candidate
- Demonstrates your reasons for applying for a course
- May form basis of an interview - tutors may ask questions arising from the statement
- May help if on results day you don't quite make your grades

How can I write a compelling personal statement?

- Invest plenty of time in the brainstorming/thinking stage, before starting to write your statement
- Structure your personal statement
- Use positive and enthusiastic language
- Make every sentence count - word count is tight!
- Ensure it reflects your 'voice', and your 'journey'
- Use evidence to support claims/statements
- Be prepared to draft and redraft
- Be honest - don't exaggerate and don't plagiarise
- Double check grammar and spelling for errors
- Ask for support, especially with proofreading and checking - it's easy for mistakes to slip through!





What might an admissions interview look like?

- Unique opportunity to discuss a subject you are passionate about with an academic tutor
- Opportunity for tutor to get to know you and your motivation for applying - you can also ask questions!
- May take the form of a 'taster' tutorial
- Unlikely to be a test of knowledge - tutor will be more interested in how you think, rather than what you know
- Discussion-based; questions will probe your subject interest, enthusiasm and aptitude
- Questions may build on your personal statement
- Questions will be challenging - don't panic if you don't immediately have an answer; take your time to think
- Some interviews may include a task, or pre-reading



How can I prepare for my admissions interview?

- Carefully reread your personal statement, and be prepared to expand upon any of the points you have included
- Re-read or re-familiarise yourself with any texts you referenced, so these are fresh in your mind
- Undertake any reading or pre-interview tasks in good time
- Practice talking about the points in your statement
- Research who will be interviewing you
- Make sure you are clear regarding interview logistics
- If you will be undertaking a virtual interview, make sure you have somewhere suitable for this task, with good wifi
- Prepare questions you would like to ask in the interview



NCH Insights

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Faculty insights

- Creative Writing is unique in allowing you to harness the power of your imagination, develop artistic ideas, and learn how to express them in a way which reaches out and connects with others. It's also wonderful for helping you develop valuable professional skills like clear communication, advanced written skills, innovative thinking and editing skills
- We look for independent thinkers who are unafraid to take risks; students who love to read, and who long to see their names in print
- Read, read, read! Think about what you love to read and why. Find writers that inspire you. Are you attracted to poetry, plays, novels or non-fiction, and why?
- Practice any form of creative writing, and articulate any ideas you have for your own writing process and development. Where do you see yourself in ten years' time?
- Creative Writing graduates are especially suited to journalism and publishing, marketing, film, media, TV and the online curation of content. Many will eventually become novelists, biographers, screenwriters and literary agents, but their skills will also transfer well into public relations, political speechwriting, satire, comedy and travel writing, as well as teaching

Student tips and hints

- Lit Hub is a great website, full of diverse articles about writing: <https://lithub.com/>. And there are some fabulous online magazines featuring lots of different kinds of creative writing - some of our favourites are PANK and SmokeLong Quarterly
- Many writers end up working for fantastic arts organisations and charities, writing content and helping develop their social media profiles. It's satisfying work, with real social impact
- It's a good idea to be an enthusiastic reader and writer, and you'll need a real commitment to practice, practice, practice, as creative writing is all about building up your skills over time



Suggestions for wider reading

- Bell, J and Magrs, P (2001), ***The Creative Writing Coursebook: Forty Authors Share Advice and Exercises for Fiction and Poetry***. London: Macmillan
- Cowan, A (2011) ***The Art of Writing Fiction***. Harlow, England; New York: Longman
- Davis, R (2008), ***Writing Dialogue for Scripts: Effective Dialogue for Film, TV, Radio and Stage***. London: A&C Black Publications
- King, S (2012), ***On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft***. London: Hodder & Stoughton
- Lodge, D (2011), ***The Art of Fiction***. London: Vintage
- Morley, D (2018), ***The Cambridge Introduction to Creative Writing***. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Strand, M and Boland, E (2001), ***The Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms***. New York: W.W. Norton & Company



Q&A



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